

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 CANBER 06223 080244Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
OMB-01 IO-13 TRSE-00 EB-08 EUR-12 /100 W
-----126232 080701Z /17

R 080059Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4003
INFO AMCONSUL BRISBANE
AMCONSUL PERTH
AMCONSUL MELBOURNE
AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
AMEMBASSY SUVA
AMCONSUL SYDNEY
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 6223

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, AS
SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL SCENE

1. SUMMARY: THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT WILL GO BACK
INTO SESSION ON AUGUST 15. PM FRASER AND HIS GOVERNMENT
FACE A NUMBER OF SERIOUS PROBLEMS INCLUDING: THE
SCANDAL OF HIS MINISTRY INVOLVING SENATOR REG
WITHERS, MINISTER FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES; WHO WAS SACKED
AUGUST 1 THE PRESENTATION OF A PROBABLE "HORROR" BUDGET WHICH WILL
FURTHER CUT WELFARE AND SOCIAL COSTS AND LIKELY LEAD TO EVEN
GREATER UNEMPLOYMENT; AND ALLEGATIONS THAT PM FRASER'S RECENT
VISIT TO THE US AND EUROPE WAS EXTRA-
VAGANTLY FLAMBOYANT AND EXPENSIVE. END SUMMARY.

2. A ROYAL COMMISSION REPORT ISSUED ON AUGUST 7
ACCUSED SENATOR REG WITHERS OF IMPROPER ELECTORAL ACTI-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CANBER 06223 080244Z

VITIES WHEN HE MOVED TO PERSUADE A QUEENSLAND ELECTORAL
REDISTRIBUTION TEAM TO PREVENT THEIR CHANGING THE NAME
OF ONE QUEENSLAND ELECTORATE. (WITHERS ALLEGEDLY DID
THIS BECAUSE IF THE NAME HAD BEEN CHANGED THIS WOULD
HAVE OPENED THE SEAT HELD BY FINANCE MINISTER ERIC
ROBINSON TO CHALLENGE FROM THE NATIONAL COUNTRY PARTY.
THIS IS BECAUSE THE LIBERSLA AND THE NCP HAVE AN AGREE-

MENT THAT THEY WILL NOT CONTEST SEATS HELD BY SITTING MINISTERS.) WITHERS WAS AN EXTREMELY POPULAR FIGURE IN RIGHT-WING LIBERAL AND COUNTRY PARTY CIRCLES AND IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA, BUT FRASER, WHO HAS PREVIOUSLY PROVED QUITE WILLING TO DISMISS MINISTERS IF THEY GET INTO DIFFICULTY, E.G., FORMER TREASURER PHILLIP LNNCY, AND FORMER ATTORNEY GENERAL ELLICOTT, DUMPED WITHERS ON AUGUST 8 AND NOW FACES STRONG BACK-BENCH OPPOSITION AS A RESULT. WHILE MINISTER FOR FINANCE (SUSPENDED) ROBINSON WAS CLEARED BY THE ROYAL COMMISSION, PUBLIC DOUBTS REMAIN AS TO HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE QUEENSLAND REDISTRIBUTION AFFAIR.

3. ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION BILL HAYDEN WILL CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS TO PORTRAY THE GOVERNMENT AS DISPLAYING A CALLOUS INDIFFERENCE TO THE COST OF ITS ANTI-INFLATIONARY MEASURES, ESPECIALLY TO THE HIGH AND INCREASING UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE COUNTRY, HAYDEN CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THE TARDINESS OF THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROMISED BY MR. FRASER SINCE 1975. AT THE SAME TIME HAYDEN WILL CONTINUE TO STRESS THAT IN HIS VIEW THE ALP IS A "NON-SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE WITH A MORE HUMANE FACE."

4. HAYDEN WILL ALSO ATTACK FRASER OVER HIS VOYAGE ALONG WITH A LARGE ENTOURAGE TO THE US AND TO EUROPE. HE WILL
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CANBER 06223 080244Z

CITE SUCH EVIDENCE OF FRASER'S EXTRAVAGANCE AS A \$15,000 BILL FOR THE HIRE OF CADILLACS FOR FRASER AND HIS PARTY DURING HIS SIX-DAY STAY IN NEW YORK; FRASER'S HOTEL BILL OF \$600 PER DAY FOR HIMSELF AND HIS WIFE ALONE, AND THE FACT THAT THE ENTIRE PARTY FLEW TO ENGLAND ON THE CONCORDE. HAYDEN WILL, OF COURSE, CONTRAST FRASER'S SPENDING WITH THE CUTS HE IS LIKELY TO PROPOSE IN ALMOST ALL AREAS OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY THOSE AREAS AFFECTING SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS. HE MADE MUCH OF THE FACT THAT FRASER WAS THE FIRST PM TO VISIT THE US WITHOUT SEEING THE PRESIDENT, AND BEWAILED THE GENERAL LACK OF RESULTS WHICH FRASER'S ENTIRE TRIP HAD PRODUCED.

5. TO ANSWER HAYDEN, FRASER WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO REMIND THE ELECTORATE THAT HE NEEDS TIME TO STRAIGHTEN OUT THE ECONOMIC MESS CREATED BY THE ALP DURING THE YEARS 1972-75. HOWEVER, THERE ARE CLEAR SIGNS OF ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL DISSATISFACTION ALONG WITH A GROWING FEELING THAT FRASER IS NOT SUFFICIENTLY RESPONSIVE TO OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS GOVERNMENT. WHETHER FRASER IS LEFT ALONE TO PURSUE HIS PRESENT POLICY WILL DEPEND LARGELY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HAYDEN, BOWEN AND OTHER

OPPOSITION FIGURES.

ALSTON

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978CANBER06223
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780323-1151
Format: TEL
From: CANBERRA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780889/aaaacwlb.tel
Line Count: 118
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 98310467-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1809284
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL SCENE
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, AS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/98310467-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014